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WHAT PROGRAM SHALL THE UNITED STATES STAND FOR IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS?

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I

We have been invited to do some very slippery guessing. Out of our little fragments of knowledge and error, out of our half-analyzed prejudices and loyalties and hopes, we are to piece together a theory of the rôle we wish America to play. We are compelled to make innumerable estimates on insufficient evidence, and many a fact we cling to may prove to be an aspiration. We are illustrating the assertion that a democracy stakes its salvation on its hypotheses.

For though no one of us can possibly know enough to be certain, no one of us can shirk this speculation. No one can reserve decision until the truth is perfectly clear. For we are not dealing with a point in Babylonian architecture over which a breathless world can suspend judgment for a generation or two. We are in that living zone of real choices where refusal to commit oneself is in itself a gigantic practical decision. A scholarship which was afraid to commit itself because it did not know enough to feel sure would merely be trying to conceal its vanity by covering the pride of intellect with the cloak of science.

II

Casting about for a method of grasping this complicated subject, it has seemed to me useful to make a few rough distinctions. We may say I think the nations of the world consist, first of all, of the great powers—Britain, Russia, Germany, Japan and the United States. They contain the major force of the world, and from them come the major initiatives of world politics. Grouped about them are the second class powers—France, Italy, Austria-Hungary, themselves of great importance but not decisive. Following them may be put third class states—such as Roumania, Bulgaria, the Scandinavian countries, the Argentine, Chile, and perhaps Brazil. In any calculation of forces in the world, their adherence one way

or the other affects the balance of power. All three classes consist of states which may be said to be represented in the concert of the powers.

Beyond them lie the territories about which the great decisions are made, the territories which constitute the objects of diplomatic action—almost all of Africa, of Latin America, Turkey, Persia and China. The discussion which goes on in the concert of the powers centers chiefly in these weak territories. Sometimes the discussion is about the actual control of some part of them, as in the Moroccan crisis, the Bagdad railway episode, the Anglo-Persian Convention, or the scramble for vantage in China. Sometimes the discussion turns upon securing additional favor and prestige, as in the intrigue of Europe to attach the Balkan States to one diplomatic group or the other. Sometimes the struggle turns on the effort to secure strategic advantages, such as Germany's attempt to open a road to the Levant, to secure a naval base in the Atlantic. Sometimes the argument turns on the method of conducting war for supremacy in the Council of Nations, as in Germany's plea for that limitation of sea power which she calls the "freedom of the seas."

III

A perfectly disinterested international program would be concerned primarily with the strengthening of the backward states. Its great object would be to create order and strength in countries like China, Turkey, and the Caribbean States. A real friend of mankind would be passionately devoted to the regeneration of those territories which constitute the stakes of diplomacy. He would wish to see their finances put in order, their administration modernized, their economic resources developed and not exploited, their people educated. He would believe that when states become modern and strong they cease to be the objects of imperialistic bargains, and are admitted to a place in the Council of the Nations.

Now historic events and geographic facts have indicated two great spheres of backward territory where the United States has a part to play—Latin America and China. As nations go, the United States has had a noble if negative program in respect to them. The Monroe Doctrine, in spite of all its vagueness, has meant a resolution on the part of the United States to give Latin America the opportunity to find itself.

Some of the Latin countries have done so, but others, especially those facing the Caribbean, have not succeeded in reaching that degree of political efficiency which the world requires. The question put to us is whether we shall take an affirmative part in regenerating them, or whether our policy shall be one of protection and irresponsibility. We are at present pursuing both policies—towards Mexico a sort of meddling *laissez-faire*—towards Haiti and San Domingo a positive program aimed at stability. The reason we pursue those differing policies is due largely to the fact that it is easier to intervene in Haiti than in Mexico—the one is not costly, the other would be. And I am not prepared to say that that isn't a good reason for making the distinction. But, nevertheless, the fact remains that we cannot forever hold to a Mexican policy which allows Mexico a free hand and at the same time protects her against the consequences. The day may come, if Mexico doesn't straighten itself out, when we may have to choose between some kind of positive American intervention, and serious trouble with Europe.

While the method in regard to Mexico is not clear, the American purpose is. We are committed to the realization of stable and progressive government in Mexico. Whether we can attain that by diplomatic and financial pressure and advice, whether we shall have to undertake a partial or a complete armed intervention, I do not know. But our guiding motive is to use as little force as is needed to attain the end.

The central item of our international program is the regeneration of Latin America. But behind this program lies the politics of the world, and before we can undertake it with any assurance we need to know how the nations of Europe and Asia would regard it. But that is a very difficult thing to know, and we are compelled to make a number of guesses. We may rule out Russia. It can have no counter-ambitions in Latin America. Britain we may assume to be more than friendly to our program. Though there will be competition between American and British merchants and capitalists, the imperial interests of Great Britain are not concerned with conquest in Latin America. The Empire is almost as much concerned as we are in the successful reform of Central and South America. On all vital issues there the United States and Great Britain are in a position to coöperate, a fact which ought to prejudice our policy in a decidedly pro-British way.

Concerning German plans in South America there is much greater difficulty in making a decision. It is said, of course, that Germany dreams of a dominion in Southern Brazil. The fact probably is that some Germans do, and some don't. It may be that German policy has crystallized now and turned definitely towards the Near East—but this we know, without mastery of the seas, a German colony in Southern Brazil would be a hostage to fortune, and I am inclined to believe that for a long time it will be utterly beyond German power to maintain a supreme army in Europe, and a supreme navy in the Atlantic. But even if there is a danger we must remember that Southern Brazil is nearer to Europe than it is to us, and that the danger is if anything more real to Great Britain than to the United States. It is a danger, however, only if Southern Brazil is temptingly easy to conquer. It is possible, therefore, to eliminate it entirely by an Anglo-American naval entente. With the adherence of France and possibly Italy, the supremacy of the seas would be invincible. If that exists, conquest in Latin America ceases to be a possibility.

IV

If our program is the regeneration of the Latin states, our politics must it seems to me look towards definite coöperation with the British Empire. In that coöperation, I believe, lies the hope of our future. We have reached a point where we are emerging from our isolation. Foreign trade is drawing us into the outer world; we are lending capital abroad, planning a merchant marine and a naval program. Wherever we go, we cannot help meeting that organization of one quarter of the human race which is known as the British Empire. We cannot ignore it—no world power can. And we have got to choose, and choose soon between antagonism and friendship. Germany made the choice about twenty years ago. She chose to challenge the mistress of the seas and brought down upon the world an unthinkable calamity. We have to make the same choice. Surely if there is any wisdom and humanity in us we shall seek a self-respecting friendship with the British Commonwealth.

I do not need to remind you of Canada, touching us at the noblest and longest frontier in the world, or of Australia and New Zealand, so like ourselves in democratic hope, subject to the same

fears about the Orient. It seems to me that if two states so parallel in interest as America and England cannot find the way of coöperation then there is little hope in the world. I realize the prejudices which fight against it—prejudices fastened upon us in school where children are taught to regard Indians and Red Coats as their natural enemies; prejudices cultivated not a little by trade competition, and kept alive as a political issue by fanatical Irish and German politicians. But our future, and I think the future of the Empire, depends upon the conquest of that prejudice, and it is altogether intolerable that racial memories should be permitted to thwart and distort our efforts to come to an understanding with the British.

All competent observers are agreed that after the war the problem of imperial reorganization will be one of the great issues. The more hopeful ones look forward to a commonwealth in which the five self-governing dominions are placed on a more equal footing in the determination of imperial policy. We shall then find ourselves the neighbor not of an isolated Canada, Australia, New Zealand, but of a series of federated democracies. Are we to ignore them, or worse still to challenge them? Are we to follow the advice of our militarists and build a navy to compete with theirs? If we do, we are preparing a disaster and conspiring against liberty. A schism of the English-speaking world would leave all its parts exposed to attack. It would leave us in a state of armed and terrified isolation. It would drive the British either to misalliances with the conquering empires of the East, or lay them open to destruction. For if liberalism divides its forces in the next generation, it will be cutting its own throat. England cannot alone continue to pay the financial and human cost of defending the Empire. We cannot alone pay the cost of isolation in a world where we have no ally. Whether we desire merely the safety of our own territory, or the safety of this hemisphere, there is, it seems to me, no choice but to come to a definite agreement with Great Britain.

That is the policy upon which our international program must rest. The kind of world we desire, a world of stable, autonomous, interdependent democracies acting as the guardians of less developed peoples—that vision depends upon the coöperation of the United States and Great Britain. France and Latin America, perhaps Italy, too, would be magnetized to it, and we should have established a mighty area of security. No one need pretend that

within it complete justice would prevail. The American negro, the Hindu, the Irish, the Egyptian would still suffer oppression. But if there were enough freedom from external danger, the mind of the west would be freed for the solution of those questions.

V

Perhaps the greatest political problem of the future is being prepared in China. A great but weak people is on the verge of conquest and exploitation. If that calamity is engineered, John Hay's prophecy will come true. The storm center of mankind will pass from Turkey and the Balkans to China, and for generations the nations will be convulsed. A quarter of the human race is involved, and every power has a stake in China. If internationalism means anything real, it means above all that China must not be disintegrated and destroyed. What China needs is time to develop, time to modernize herself, time to find her own strength. The kind of work we are pledged to do in Latin America needs to be done on a much greater scale in China. But we cannot do it alone. We cannot from our isolation challenge the ambitions of Japan. That must be done if at all by the united western nations, and the core of that unity is Anglo-American coöperation.

The question of whether or not to hold on to the Philippines is primarily a factor of this larger problem. If we fail to unite with the British Empire, then we must withdraw our aid from China, and that means that we must for our own safety withdraw from the outpost at the Philippines. If China is to fall to Japan, then the Philippines should go with it. If Japan is to have complete dominion, we cannot afford to leave an indefensible possession lying across her path. But if in coöperation with England and France we propose to protect China, then the retention of the Philippines is a risk we can afford to take.

VI

I realize that to talk of Anglo-American coöperation in the midst of this war seems like trying to organize the world in a permanent alliance against Germany. Yet I believe that just the opposite result is likely to follow. For Germany will not be eliminated as a great power. In so far as the war is a struggle between Germany and England no permanent decision is likely to be reached,

Realizing this, responsible British officials have begun to talk about a permanent economic entente against Germany. They feel that if Germany is allowed to recuperate, she will challenge the Empire in a generation or two.

This is a prospect to make men shudder, and it is one which from every human point of view is intolerable. Whatever influence we have should be used to prevent it from happening. But how? It seems to me that in an Anglo-American alliance, Great Britain and France would find so much safety that they could risk a conciliatory policy towards Germany after the war. I for one should be inclined to say that the United States must insist on that as one of the terms of our bargain. Take away from England the fear of destruction, an alliance with us would do that, and the foreign policy of England after the war will be directed by liberals instead of jingoes. Take away from Germany the possibility of a standing grievance, and liberal Germany may come to the top. For when the costs of this war come to be assessed in Germany, there is, I believe, nothing that can preserve the present ruling classes except a fear on the part of the people that the world is conspiring to crush them. After the war, the best allies the German oligarchy will have are the bogeys of England and Russia. Dispel those bogeys by a generous policy like that dealt out to the Boers, give the German democracy air, and instead of a Germany frightened into aggression, there may arise a new Germany with which the western world can live at peace. To that great end we can contribute by the right kind of understanding with Great Britain.

VII

But understanding is not an easy thing to create, and unhappily there is not much of it at present. Our neutrality has made us no friends except in Belgium; and the kind of coöperation I have suggested cannot be reasoned into existence. It must be warmed and illuminated by some dramatic and gallant action.

There is, I think, one thing the United States might do which would give to Anglo-American and Franco-American friendship the impetus it requires. Belgium is the opportunity. A large number of people in England, France, and the United States, I think an increasing number, believe that we missed a great moral opportunity in failing to stamp our disapproval upon the violation

of Belgium. It was a missed opportunity, I think, but it is one for which it is hardly fair to blame the administration. The fact is no one seems to have thought of it at the time. At least no one thought of it out loud. Mr. Roosevelt's first utterance so far as I can discover was on November 8, 1914, three months after the crime.

Yet the feeling exists today that we should have done something about Belgium. It is not too late to do something. After the war, Belgium will again have to be neutralized by the Powers, and I suggest to you that the United States might become one of the guarantors. Politically this would accomplish two great things. It would give Belgium an unquestioned international status, and so dispel that modicum of honest German sentiment, mistaken I believe, which says that Belgium was a potential ally of France and England. Secondly, it would be a real protection to France and England—we should be offering them something very tangible; and in return we could in self-respect ask them to open negotiations for an agreement about Latin America, the Far East, a naval and an economic arrangement. Belgium, which is the rallying point for liberal sentiment in the western world, may become the pledge which unites it.

VIII

But the real bond of unity is an agreement about sea power, a thing which cannot be insisted upon too much. The future of America is bound up with the future of sea power. Our security from invasion exists so long as no potential enemy can command the seas against us. The security of the Monroe Doctrine, or of the new Pan-Americanism depends upon the control of the seas. The future of China can be decided by the nations which control the seas.

This control was exercised for a long time by Great Britain. But towards 1900 the face of things changed when Germany began to build a challenging navy. England found that she could no longer dominate all the oceans, and there followed what might be called the partitioning of sea power. The British fleet was concentrated in the North Sea, the western Pacific was turned over to Japan, the Mediterranean to France, and the Caribbean to us. The arrangement has worked fairly well during this war in the sense

that except sporadically the highways of the world have remained open. No man can calculate the benefit to peaceful civilization which has come from the fact that the Allies have had a clear dominion of the seas. It has given us a security which we should never have enjoyed if Germany had been able to make the ocean a battle ground. Sea power has held together, and that is why we in America have been able to escape the worst ravages of the war. Had the Allies lost command of the seas, the suffering of America and most of the neutral world would have been enormous.

The Germans speak of sea power as a tyranny. And in a sense they are right. It has enabled a little island to play the leading part in world politics. The possession of sea power is the ability to exert tremendous pressure on every other nation. But though it is autocratic, sea power differs radically from a conquering army. Its power is in the main bloodless—it doesn't overrun and burn and destroy, and lay waste the homes of men. If sea power is sufficiently strong it wins victories without fighting battles. The effect of it may be cruel in that it can be used to starve a people, but it hasn't the quality of immediate, murderous violence which belongs to militarism on land. It can be employed with deliberation, with regard to non-combatant life. It is force, but force tempered so that civilized men can use it with discrimination.

Of all forms of armed coercion it is the most decent and the most effective. It is the ideal weapon for international policing. It can be used at the least cost to humanity. But the humanity of sea power and the effectiveness of it depend upon its unity and its supremacy. A divided sovereignty of the seas means a cruel anarchy of the seas. It means a ruinous competition in armaments and endless warfare by rivals for sea power.

It is better for the world, I think, to endure a tyranny like England's than to relapse into an anarchy such as the Germans plan. It is better that one power should be the master than that three or four should be fighting for mastery, just as it is better to live in a country ruled by an efficient autocracy than in one where a number of factions are struggling for supremacy.

But as things stand now, England can no longer maintain the command of the seas. She has already partitioned it among her allies. She is challenged by Germany. If the worst happened she might be challenged by the United States. And all observers

know that the alliance with Japan is likely to prove a rope of sand. We are face to face, therefore, with the most serious calamity that could happen to our civilization—the disintegration of sea power.

To that supreme fact American foreign policy must be adjusted. All else is trivial in comparison to it. I submit to you that the whole internal democratic program of the United States, the program for Latin America, the program for the preservation of China is endangered now, and will be wrecked, if the unity and supremacy of sea power are destroyed.

We must do our part in preserving it, we and the self-governing dominions of the Empire. The British Isles, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States must share and preserve the command of the sea. If that command is maintained, it will grow stronger by its own strength. France and Italy and Pan America will gain by it and support it if it is strong. But if it is weak and faltering, we shall all be drifting in different directions, and an endless confusion and intrigue of world politics, of shifting alliances, of panic armament will plague us. It is in the power of the United States and Great Britain to establish such an area of security that the unaggressive nations will be drawn towards them.

The variety of the peoples involved in such an alliance is so great that it would have to exercise its power in a liberal way. Within it would be all races, religions, languages, and grades of civilization, and that is the stuff of which liberalism is made. Such an alliance could not be autocratic in its policy because the people composing it would be too heterogeneous. It would not always be wise or just, but in the long run it would not dare to be too harsh or too selfish. It would touch all humanity at too many points for it to adopt the dangerous morality of a narrow nationalism.

IX

I hope I have no illusions about the difficulties of such an alliance, the problem of converting Americans to it, the problem of finding the concrete basis of agreement with Britain, or of creating the machinery of conducting a common policy. But what alternative is there? What has anybody to offer that is less dangerous and less difficult? Surely, no one will dare to come before you urging us to a policy of armed isolation. For isolation is out of the

question because it postulates an impossibility. It assumes that we can somehow or other ignore the fate of the British Empire; it assumes that somehow or other we are not concerned with the disintegration of sea power; it assumes that we can compete with British trade, the British marine, and the British navy without bringing disaster upon ourselves. Those who talk of isolation merely reveal their indifference. They simply refuse to face the stern realities which a change in world conditions has revealed to the imagination. We are in a time when the inadequacy of language is a cause of despair. For all that we care about hangs upon a vision of what sea power means, and upon the will to act upon that vision.

X

All larger schemes, such as those for a League of Peace with Permanent Courts of Arbitration and Conciliation must rest it seems to me on the unity and supremacy of sea power concentrated in the hands of the liberal powers of the west. They may be workable, but they will be workable only if the British Empire, the United States, France, Pan America, and ultimately Germany are knit together, their economic conflicts compromised, their military resources pooled, their diplomacy in a league of the west. For what the world needs is not so much international machinery, as a cohesion of power. Without that we shall be like the doctrinaires who write perfect constitutions for Haiti instead of uniting the factions which disrupt it.

The task of the liberal in international affairs is to rivet together the liberal states, to focus within them overwhelming power, and by the majesty of their strength and the wisdom of their policy to seduce the empires into friendship. No machinery we can suggest, no rule of international law is likely to survive, unless the liberal world represents a sufficient union of power to make it a shield for men's protection, and a standard to which the people can rally.